

# Argumentative or Informative Essay

## Choose One Writing Type.

**Argumentative Prompt: Argue whether “protesting” leads to change.**

**Informative Prompt: How has “protest” been used throughout history?**

### Source 1: Protest Nation

MAY 15, 2017 | By Bryan Brown

From the Boston Tea Party to the modern-day Tea Party and the Women’s March, America has been shaped by protest movements



1. It was a gray January Saturday in Washington, D.C., but nobody was resting. Just one day after Donald Trump had been inaugurated as president, the streets were jammed with people participating in the Women’s March.
2. Near the U.S. Capitol, they cheered speeches defending the rights of women and minorities whom they believed the incoming president had shown disrespect for during his campaign. Then, as if to make sure Trump would hear them, many of them marched to the gates of the White House.
3. The crowd in Washington was estimated to have been at least half a million people. Including the participants of more than 600 other “sister marches” around the country, the Women’s March was likely the nation’s largest single-day demonstration ever.

### Protest is essential for our democracy.

4. The massive gathering was part of a deep history of protest in the U.S., according to David Meyer of the University of California, Irvine. It all goes back, he says, to the first major American protest, the Boston Tea Party in 1773, when a band of American colonists boarded three British ships and dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. The act of defiance was part of a struggle over taxes and control by Great Britain, but it also set the stage for a larger struggle: the fight for independence from Britain in the American Revolution (1775-83).
5. “Protests [seize](#) [the country’s] attention and force figures like presidents to respond to them,” Meyer says. The tradition is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as “the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Go



vernment.” For the nation’s Founders, who had helped lead it from resistance to independence, Meyer says, this was a sign of how much they valued dissent. “America was born from protest,” says Meyer.

6. Many of the most influential American protests have been big marches, like the Women’s March, often in the streets of the nation’s capital. A 1913 rally in Washington for women’s [suffrage](#), for example, led to ratification of the 19th Amendment (1920), giving women the right to vote. The 1963 March on Washington focused the nation’s attention on civil rights for African-Americans and helped lead to passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination in voting, schools, and the workplace.
7. During the long fight for equality for African-Americans, many smaller acts of civil disobedience, such as boycotts of segregated buses and sit-ins at whites-only lunch counters throughout the South, also helped end discriminatory laws and practices, and the success of the movement as a whole helped prove how important protests were to social change.

### Sit-ins & Burning Draft Cards

8. In the mid-1960s, U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War and a military draft ignited a new wave of resistance among liberal Americans, particularly young people. They believed the nation was needlessly [meddling](#) in another country’s civil war—one that ended up costing more than 58,000 American lives.
9. Inspired by civil rights campaigns, activists engaged in different forms of protest, including staging sit-ins at universities and burning draft cards. Marches were crucial as well. On Oct. 15, 1969, about 2 million people rallied across the country to show their opposition to the war. Historians say the protests were a major reason the U.S. withdrew its troops from Vietnam in 1973.
10. Conservatives have also used protest as a tool to bring about change. In 2009, following the election of President Barack Obama, groups of concerned citizens began showing up at town hall meetings. Many objected to the Affordable Care Act (also called Obamacare), which they believed would burden them with higher taxes and healthcare costs. Protesters also voiced long held [grievances](#) over gun rights, undocumented immigrants, and the government’s expanding role in Americans’ lives.
11. This new movement soon called itself the Tea Party, a tribute to the original American protest against government control. What made it especially effective, experts say, is that Tea Partiers didn’t just demonstrate; they also got involved in their communities and voted for members of Congress who supported their views. Many believe that the dissent the Tea Partiers stirred up among conservatives helped contribute to the election of President Trump last year.
12. Today, experts say, we may be in the most active time for protest since the 1960s. Meyer says a new surge of resistance began in 2011 with the Occupy Wall Street movement, an outcry against economic inequality in America. For months thousands of people in New York City staged a sit-in near Wall Street, a symbol of banking and wealth. The movement spread to other cities, energizing a new generation of young activists.
13. Then, in 2013, a movement known as Black Lives Matter formed in response to a series of high-profile shootings of African-Americans by police. The protests fueled a national conversation about racial in the criminal justice system.
14. Trump’s election last year has only intensified protests, as it has sparked passionate public debate among Americans. While many liberals believe Trump’s policies are a threat to civil liberties, his supporters think Trump will bring jobs and pride back to working people. Both sides have demonstrated to show their points of view.
15. Just since January, scores of protests have opposed Trump’s attempts to ban travel from some Muslim-majority nations and defended immigrants’ rights. Meanwhile, conservatives have held pro-Trump rallies and town hall meetings seeking to pressure lawmakers to repeal Obamacare.



16. No one knows exactly what will result from this moment in history. But one thing is certain, Meyer says: People will not stop reaching back to the spirit of the Boston Tea Party to try to shape the future of the nation.

17. “Protest is what we started with,” Meyer says. “It is an essential thing” for our democracy.

## Source 2: Why Street Protests Don't Work


How can so many demonstrations accomplish so little?

MOISÉS NAÍM | APRIL 7, 2014



1. Street protests are in. From Bangkok to Caracas, and Madrid to Moscow, these days not a week goes by without news that a massive crowd has amassed in the streets of another of the world's big cities. The reasons for the protests vary (bad and too-costly public transport or education, the plan to raze a park, police abuse, etc.). Often, the grievance quickly expands to include a repudiation of the government, or its head, or more general denunciations of corruption and economic inequality.
2. Aerial photos of the anti-government marches routinely show an intimidating sea of people furiously demanding change. And yet, it is surprising how little these crowds achieve. The fervent political energy on the ground is hugely disproportionate to the practical results of these demonstrations.
3. Notable exceptions of course exist: In Egypt, Tunisia, and Ukraine, street protests actually contributed to the overthrow of the government. But most massive rallies fail to create significant changes in politics or public policies. Occupy Wall Street is a great example. Born in the summer of 2011 (not in Wall Street but in Kuala Lumpur's [Dataran Merdeka](#)), the Occupy movement spread quickly and was soon roaring in the central squares of nearly 2,600 cities around the world.
4. The hodgepodge groups that participated had no formal affiliation with one another, no clear hierarchy, and no obvious leaders. But social networks helped to virally replicate the movement so that the basic patterns of camping, protesting, fundraising, communicating with the media, and interacting with the authorities were similar from place to place. The same message echoed everywhere: It is unacceptable that global wealth is concentrated in the hands of an elite 1 percent while the remaining 99 percent can barely scrape by.
5. Such a global, massive, and seemingly well-organized initiative should have had a greater impact. But it didn't. Though the topic of economic inequality has [gained momentum](#) in the years since, in practice it is hard to find meaningful changes in public policy based on Occupy's proposals. By and large the Occupy movement has now vanished from the headlines.
6. In fact, government responses usually amount to little more than rhetorical appeasement, and certainly no major political reforms. Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, for example, publicly validated the frustrations of those who took to the streets of her country, and promised that changes would be made, but those 'changes' have yet to materialize. The reaction of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the protests in his country was more aggressive. He accused the opposition and protesters of plotting a sophisticated conspiracy against him, and tried to block Twitter and YouTube. Earlier this month, Erdogan scored a [huge victory](#) in

Turkey's local elections. The same dynamic has played out during demonstrations against violence in Mexico City and corruption in New Delhi: massive marches, scant results.

7. Why? How can so many extremely motivated people achieve so little? One answer might be found in the results of an experiment conducted by Anders Colding-Jørgensen of the University of Copenhagen. In 2009, he created a Facebook group to protest the demolition of the historic Stork Fountain in a major square of the Danish capital. Ten thousand people joined in the first week; after two weeks, the group was 27,000 members-strong. That was the extent of the experiment. There was never a plan to demolish the fountain—Colding-Jørgensen simply wanted to show how easy it was to create a relatively large group using social media.
8. In today's world, an appeal to protest via Twitter, Facebook, or text message is sure to attract a crowd, especially if it is to demonstrate against something—anything, really—that outrages us. The problem is what happens after the march. Sometimes it ends in violent confrontation with the police, and more often than not it simply fizzles out. Behind massive street demonstrations there is rarely a well-oiled and more-permanent organization capable of following up on protesters' demands and undertaking the complex, face-to-face, and dull political work that produces real change in government. This is the important point made by Zeynep Tufekci, a fellow at the Center for Information Technology Policy at Princeton University, who writes that “Before the Internet, the tedious work of organizing that was required to circumvent censorship or to organize a protest also helped build infrastructure for decision making and strategies for sustaining momentum. Now movements can rush past that step, often to their own detriment.”
9. There is a powerful political engine running in the streets of many cities. It turns at high speed and produces a lot of political energy. But the engine is not connected to wheels, and so the “movement” doesn't move. Achieving that motion requires organizations capable of *old-fashioned* and permanent political work that can leverage street demonstrations into political change and policy reforms. In most cases, that means political parties. But it doesn't necessarily mean existing parties that demonstrators don't trust to be change agents. Instead, as I have written elsewhere, we need new or deeply reformed parties that can energize both idealists who feel politically homeless and professionals who are fully devoted to the daily grind of building a political organization that knows how to convert political energy into public policies.
10. As many have noted, social media can both facilitate and undermine the formation of more effective political parties. We are familiar with the power of social media to identify, recruit, mobilize, and coordinate supporters as well as to fundraise. But we also know that clicktivism and slacktivism undermine real political work by creating the feel-good illusion that clicking “like” on a Facebook page or tweeting incendiary messages from the comfort of one's computer or smartphone is equivalent to the activism that effects change.
11. What we've witnessed in recent years is the popularization of street marches without a plan for what happens next and how to keep protesters engaged and integrated in the political process. It's just the latest manifestation of the dangerous illusion that it is possible to have democracy without political parties—and that street protests based more on social media than sustained political organizing is the way to change society.

## Source 2: Star-Spangled Protest

Why an athlete's refusal to stand for the national anthem has sparked such intense debate

[October 10, 2016](#) /By Carl Stoffers/ Upfront Magazine

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1. When the national anthem played before an NFL preseason game in August, San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick remained seated on the sidelines instead of standing like almost everyone else in the stadium.
2. Kaepernick expected some criticism for his protest—carried out, he said, to call attention to police brutality and racial injustice in the U.S.—but what followed was a firestorm. Many accused him of thumbing his nose at America by not joining in a patriotic ritual that's long been a fixture at sporting events.
3. "There's ways to make change w/o disrespecting & bringing shame to the very country & family who afforded you so many blessings," read one of thousands of angry tweets. It came from Kaepernick's biological mother, Heidi Russo, who gave him up for adoption as a child.
4. Others praised him for taking a principled stand, and even President Obama seemed to sympathize.
5. "I think he cares about some real, legitimate issues that have to be talked about," Obama said during a press conference while visiting China.
6. The debate over Kaepernick's actions raises two questions: How did the national anthem become so [integral](#) to organized sports, and why do Americans have such strong feelings about it?
7. "It's part of our national religion to believe in the flag and Betsy Ross and the national anthem," says Orin Starn, professor of cultural anthropology at Duke University in North Carolina. "When these national symbols are called into question, it makes people angry."

### The War of 1812

8. Francis Scott Key, a lawyer from Maryland, wrote "The Star-Spangled Banner" on Sept. 14, 1814, after witnessing the [bombardment](#) of Fort McHenry in Baltimore by British ships during the War of 1812. Key was inspired by the [tattered](#) American flag that remained flying above the fort during the battle, and wrote a poem about it. The poem was later set to the tune of a popular English song and became the national anthem by an act of Congress in 1931.
9. It was first performed at baseball games in the mid-1800s, and it became more widespread in baseball in the period of intense patriotism that swept the nation during World War II (1939-45).
10. Pat Courtney, a spokesman for Major League Baseball, said that the national anthem has been performed before all MLB games since 1942 and that "it remains an important tradition that has great meaning for our fans."
11. Other sports also incorporated the song into their pregame rituals. Today, all four major sports leagues ask fans and players to stand and remove their hats while the anthem plays. But no league does it with more pomp and circumstance than the NFL, which often stages elaborate displays featuring a giant flag and jet-fighter flyovers.

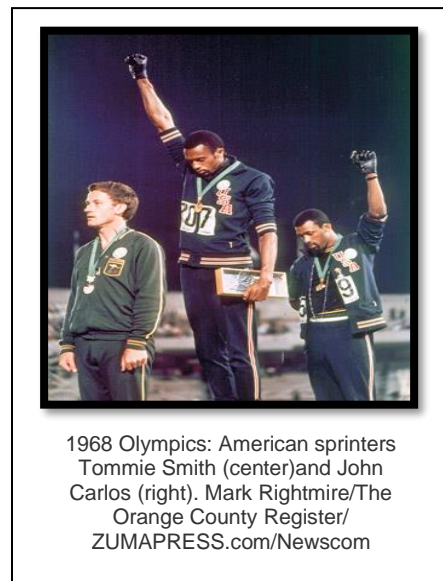
### An American Tradition

12. Most other countries don't have similar rituals. For example, national anthems aren't typically played before Japanese baseball games or German hockey games. Why the difference? According to Starn, it probably lies in America's history.



Colin Kaepernick (at right, kneeling), joined by teammate Eric Reid in San Diego on September 12, during Kaepernick's third national anthem protest  
Marcio Jose Sanchez/AP Images

13. Unlike most nations, the U.S. wasn't created on a common platform of religion or ancestry. Instead, Americans are bound by ideas and concepts—that all people are created equal, for example—and something that represents those ideas, like an anthem, can come to seem vitally important, even **sacred**.
14. “We’re the most sports-obsessed society in the history of the world, and we’re also a nation that’s obsessed with patriotism and pride in identity,” Starn says. “You can’t be a politician who doesn’t wear a flag lapel pin, and you can’t go to an NFL game and not hear the anthem.”
15. Kaepernick isn’t the first athlete to be criticized for slighting the anthem, whether intentionally or not. In 1968, U.S. sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos were expelled from the Olympics in Mexico City for raising gloved fists in a “black power” salute while on the medal stand during the playing of the national anthem. Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf of the Denver Nuggets was suspended by the NBA in 1996 for refusing to stand during the anthem. And at the Rio Olympics this summer, gold medal gymnast Gabby Douglas was **lambasted** on social media for not placing her hand over her heart while the anthem played—even after she explained that as a member of a military family, she had learned to stand with arms at her sides.
16. Given how strongly many Americans feel about the anthem, it’s not surprising that protests like Kaepernick’s have been relatively rare. When he repeated the protest during a second preseason game, however, he was joined by a teammate. And during the first week of the NFL season, players from several teams chose to kneel or raise fists during the anthem. In early September, Megan Rapinoe, an American soccer player, knelt during the anthem before a women’s pro soccer league game in support of Kaepernick.



17. Following his second protest, the 49ers announced that Kaepernick had lost the starting quarterback job to Blaine Gabbert. The team said the decision was based solely on performance, but others wondered whether Kaepernick had been harmed by the outcry over his actions.
18. “It’s the step off the cliff that most athletes aren’t going to take,” says Starn. “You might have LeBron James wearing a Black Lives Matter shirt, but the national anthem has always seemed sacred, and you would just put your hand over your heart and stand up like everyone else.”